

THE ALIEN IN OUR MIDST



“Spies are the ears and eyes of princes.”

—*English Proverb.*

“They come not single spies
But in battalions.”—*Shakespeare.*

“Spies are the most infernal vermin that God
hath ever permitted to crawl on the face of
the earth, to poison civil society.”

—*Sir R. Maltravers.*

BY
WILLIAM PETERSEN

6. A

The Alien in our Midst.

On 25 November, 1914, the Constitutional Club held its first monthly discussion of the winter session on "The Spy Peril"—a question which had become a very burning and important one in connection with the war.

In the unavoidable absence of Mr. Marshall Hall, K.C., M.P., the chair was taken by the Rt. Hon. James H. Campbell, K.C., M.P. for Dublin University, who had successively been Solicitor-General and Attorney-General for Ireland under the Unionist Government. In the course of his introductory remarks, he dwelt on the nefarious underhand efforts of Germany to stir up sedition in the sister-isle by means of secret agents and corruption of the Press.

Mr. Joynson-Hicks, M.P., then delivered his opening address. The Unionist Party, he said, were behaving in the most patriotic way; but while they were supporting the war and the Government he, for one, was not prepared to abdicate his right of criticism. He condemned the Home Office attitude, and warned them that the brutalities which had been committed in Belgium and France would be nothing to those that would occur here if Germany got the chance. He had received in one day ninety-three letters giving instances of spying, signalling, and of doubtful Germans. He pointed to the number of German spies who had been in France and Belgium, and insisted that many of them had come over here as refugees.

Therefore, it was important that all aliens should be retired twenty miles from the coast. He suggested that all males of military age should be interned, and the older men with the women and children all sent home. They were not wanted in England. He mentioned the case of a German who was found steering an English ship. Was that

man shot? He named other cases, and called attention to the naturalization since the war of the German chauffeurs employed by two members of the Cabinet. One of these chauffeurs had since gone to Switzerland, which was ~~uncommonly~~ near Germany.

He condemned the Censor for holding up the news of the shooting of Lody (a German naval officer convicted by court-martial) for five days. Let the Government tell the public all the news, good or bad—the country would stand it—but the Government should not be allowed to use the censorship to prevent criticism of themselves. Another danger was the number of American citizens who were admitted freely, though they were Germans. A passenger on the "Lusitania" had written to say that fifty Germans came over on her on her last voyage, and many of these boasted that they would land in England without question.

Mr. Charles Palmer, Editor of "The Globe," said that, if it were known how deep and well considered was the plot that had been devised to destroy British credit before the war, it would astonish London.

Among other speakers was Mr. William Petersen, who said:—

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—

May I be permitted to contribute to the discussion? Although not intending or being prepared to speak, I cannot refrain from commenting upon the views advanced by the last speaker, who, in referring to the eloquent remarks made by previous speakers, seemed to lapse into a controversial mood. Here is no room for debate; we are at war! Touching upon the very appropriate and seasonable references made by Mr. Palmer to the Naturalized Alien question, I think I may be able to supplement and substantiate them; if not so eloquently, at all events as earnestly.

It is with very great diffidence that I am attempting to address you to-night. Although a member of this Club for upwards of twenty years I have never once taken part in any of your poli-

tical discussions. Born in Denmark, having had the privilege of living in England from my early youth, and being naturalized for nearly forty years, I am as loyal an Englishman as any of you here. But I cannot get over the fact that I was not born in England. As I said, I am a Dane by birth, so, in the eyes of the world, I fear, I still remain a foreigner, who from early youth has chosen this country for my adoption and protection. I am making these remarks in order to emphasize the fact that no man, who is not born on the soil—though legally claiming citizenship—has any right to interfere in the political or domestic affairs of his adopted country. No naturalization, of however long standing, can ever change the nature of a man. It is a misnomer to call it “naturalization”; it is simply nationalization.

Physically speaking, the medical profession says that all the particles in a man's body are changed every seven years; but although I am thus undergoing my seventh metamorphosis on English soil, I find that my bones, my whole frame, my eyes remain the same, and retain their original colour—except, perhaps, my hair.

Psychologically speaking, no doubt, certain changes naturally take place under the varied conditions under which you are placed; your mind develops, and you look at things from different standpoints; but the original soul and spirit reflected in your mind and actions retain their original hue. Your entire way of thinking and moral ideas were formed by your early teaching, by influence of early literature, of living and environment, and will always remain the

foundation of your actions.

It does not matter how dear and kind people surrounding you may be, or how much you may love them, or share their joys and sorrows; these emotions cannot take the place of the love of your parents and kindred, and the natural attachments of your early home life; and I defy any honest man to throw off that love, to sacrifice everything endeared to him in his childhood and youth, and find any real substitute for it all in after life.

I say, therefore, physically and psychologically speaking, I am still a Dane, and the history of the country of my birth does not put me to shame. It is a history with which England is closely bound up, and when Englishmen speak of their Anglo-Saxon lineage they mean their Viking or Norse-Danish descent. They forget that the Anglo-Saxon race was in its boyhood when the Vikings lived and reigned in England by conquest or agreement, and blended their race with that of the Britons, producing characteristics which were as pure a thousand years ago as they are in the noblest Englishman of to-day. Even the Normans of William the Conqueror were pure Danes or Norsemen who had previously conquered and settled in Normandy. As Tennyson wrote in his thrilling welcome to Alexandra, our "Sea-Kings' daughter from over the sea"—

"Saxon, and Norman, and Dane are we,

But all of us Danes in our welcome of thee."

When I compare the national characteristics of the English with those of Scandinavians, as recorded in our earliest chronicles, I find that the same descriptions apply to-day. For every heroic

vice the Vikings placed in the opposite scale an heroic virtue. If men robbed and plundered, as most men did in the days when Might made Right, yet the heaven-implanted instinct of hospitality was as the marrow of their bones. No beggar ever left their doors without alms, no traveller asked in vain for shelter, no guest but was welcomed with open arms, and sped on his way with a gift. Are not these also characteristic traits of the present English people?

As cunningly terrible the Viking might prove to his foes, so superbly true was he to his friends. The man who could unmercifully crush his enemy would as readily give his own blood unsparingly, if in so doing he could aid the cause of some sworn brother or ally. Is not this also forcibly brought home to us to-day, as characteristic of the English race?

Among the Vikings, rape and lying were equally punishable by death; and if this double standard of morality were applied to the modern "Huns"—soldiers on one side, and the concocters of official reports on the other—there certainly would be a very considerable diminution in the number of our antagonists.

A race of conquerors, the Vikings, only bent the knee to proved superiors. Not to the royal-born man merely did they offer allegiance, but to the man who proved himself their leader in courage and their master in skill. Again, I say, are not these also characteristics to-day of the English race?

While feeling proud of my British citizenship I am none the less proud of my Danish origin, just as an Englishman might equally be proud

of every drop of Danish blood in his veins. But, should Denmark, which God forbid ! ever become an enemy of England—though this seems almost unthinkable and unnatural—then, however loyal I am to this dear old country, I should, as a matter of common decency, at once retire from any position of trust I might be holding, and consider myself lucky if allowed to withdraw into peaceful seclusion with my English wife and children, leaving all my personal sentiments and passions in a state of temporary suspension.

Though repeatedly invited to enter into politics I have consistently declined, as I consider it most unwarrantable self-assertion for any foreign-born person—apart from seeking to become a Member of Parliament—to take part in any political controversy with regard to the domestic or foreign affairs of his adopted country. Thank God, no naturalized Dane, as far as I am aware, has ever been so presumptuous as to give way to Parliamentary ambition in his adopted land. That unenviable distinction has been mostly left to Germans—those self-asserting apostles of the higher “Kultur.”

This discussion, although held under the auspices of your Political Committee, is not a political one. It is a patriotic, national, even international sort of meeting to discuss the danger of harbouring an enemy common to most other civilised countries, nay, to the whole civilised world : an enemy of dastardly brutality, fighting under a hypocritical cloak of religion and culture, an enemy to the whole human race. That being so, I feel justified, for once, in taking part in these important discussions.

Gentlemen, we are at war ! fighting against the most formidable enemy that this or any other country has ever faced, fighting for our own homes and liberty, nay, for our very existence. We have joined hands with our Allies in this Titanic struggle. England is the Trustee of our Allies, and we are all—as Englishmen—signatories to the “Trust Deed”—a “scrap of paper,” may be, in the eyes of Teutonic burglars and brigands, but a document to be championed, upheld, and redeemed by the precious blood of our sons and brothers.

A man who lacks that high sense of honour is unworthy of the citizenship of a great nation. He is a churlish degenerate; and the man of alien origin who is naturalized in this country, yet still takes advantage of his British citizenship to mix with his fellow-subjects as if with equal right, while his whole heart and soul are with the enemy, is a treacherous villain, who ought to be shunned by every right-thinking man, woman, and child. But if the same person attempts, directly or indirectly, to aid and abet others in doing anything antagonistic to the interests of his adopted country, he proves himself a despicable traitor of the most pernicious type for whom hanging would be too good.

Gentlemen, we are at war ! Yet, unfortunately, a large number of our fellow-citizens do not yet seem to realise this to the full extent. But this being a country with such enormous financial and economic resources, and without a land-frontier, a certain spirit of self-complacency and inborn faith in its glorious history have caused many of its citizens to stand calmly by, feeling sure that

history will repeat itself without further trouble, and that all will be well with them in the end.

A great—too great—proportion of our fellow-citizens seem to be imbued with the idea that if they simply pay their taxes towards the upkeep of the Navy and Army, it is no further concern of theirs. Somebody, they think, will be sure to look after the country and its welfare. They eat and sleep regularly, contenting themselves with the idea that our sailors, soldiers, and policemen will see to the security of their hearths and homes.

What a fool's paradise these easy-going people are living in, and have been living in for so many years! They are trifling with their very existence as a nation.

Seeing, as I have seen, the conspiracies consistently planned, fanned, and developed by the German Hun, right in our midst, for so many years, I have never lost an opportunity of trying to enlighten my fellow-citizens and prepare them for "*Der Tag*."

The entire aim of the German people has been to organise and prepare for "*Der Tag*," when England should be invaded and destroyed; and in doing so it was necessary for them to trample down any small nation, regardless of treaties which might be standing in her way. Small nations, gentlemen, have been as stepping-stones for greater ones, and woe betide us if they disappeared. The pages of every little nation's history proclaim the greatest and most prolific spirit of progress. Every little nation by its own culture has contributed to the development of the world, and can claim the right of independence and liberty. It is the struggles of

the minor nations which have made them what they are. What sunshine is to the vegetable kingdom, so is liberty to a nation, and it is the duty of every State, big or little, to fight for its freedom and independence. And it is the duty of every larger State to protect the independence of smaller ones for the good of humanity at large.

“**Mr. Lloyd George**, in his great and patriotic speech at the Queen’s Hall, September last, said :

“**Can you name a single country in the world for the freedom of which the modern Prussian has ever sacrificed a single life ?**”

After referring to the false ideas of hard, selfish, and material civilization which Germany had been drilled into by militarism, he went on to say :

“**They cannot understand a great Empire pledging its resources, pledging its might, pledging the lives of its children, pledging its very existence to protect a little nation that seeks for its defence.**” But his description of the “**Prussian Road-Hog of Europe**” put the whole thing in a nutshell. “**Small nationalities in the way,**” he said, “**are flung to the roadside bleeding and broken ; women and children thrust under the wheel of his cruel car ; Britain ordered out of his road.** All I can say is this : If the old British spirit is alive in British hearts, that bully will be torn from his seat.

Were he to win, it would be the greatest catastrophe that had befallen democracy since the days of the Holy Alliance and its ascendancy.” Gentlemen, so say I !

I wish a Government of the spirit of Mr. Lloyd

George had been in power in 1864, instead of the Palmerston *régime*, when little Denmark would probably not have been subjected to humiliation by the "Prussian Brigand," who was then as atrocious and cruel as we find him to-day. The "Prussian Road-Hog" would not have been an applicable term in those days, but, nevertheless, he was the same arrogant and obnoxious brute.

Gentlemen, when I address you in this strain, it is because I am anxious to show how you have been, and are still being hoodwinked by the "Prussian Road-Hog." History repeats itself. I am speaking feelingly and from experience. To show you just one example of the way in which the German Hun prepares his plans and designs on the smaller nations, I need only mention his continuous attention paid to little Denmark. That little nation, from its own bitter experience, can well realise what Belgium is passing through now, and picture in vivid colours what it might have to expect if the "cultured" Teuton should get the upper hand.

The injuries inflicted by the Prussians and their Austrian allies in 1864-66, and the subsequent injustice, cruelty, and insults offered to Slesvig and the remainder left of Denmark are within my memory, and have been forcibly handed down to the present generation. Even quite recently—less than three years ago—Denmark was subjected to a most unpardonable indignity by being forced to suppress and withdraw from her national schools a standard book used for teaching elementary history, because the phraseology

in parts was not sufficiently complimentary to the "cultured" German people.

Representations were made through the German Minister in Copenhagen, it being pointed out that it was undesirable to impart to the Danish children any historical knowledge that would be likely to foster an anti-German spirit. The diplomatic pressure brought to bear upon the Danish Government at the time was so great that, in spite of the wave of public indignation sweeping over the country and arousing furious opposition, little Denmark had to submit to the wishes of her German bully, suppress the book, and quietly swallow this monstrous insult and interference in her domestic affairs.

The inference to be drawn from Germany's method of thus bullying a little State, and her future plans for dealing with Denmark, is too obvious to need further comment. It is the "Road-Hog of Europe" over again! The Prussian "Junker" in European politics!

Fifteen years ago, when I talked to the average Englishman—including officers, and politicians of every party—about the German spy-system, and the general preparations for the realization of Germany's ambition to bring England to her knees—people laughed at me, and looked upon me as a crank and a scaremonger. Five years ago, aye, even five months ago, my state of mind was considered no better, and I could get nobody to listen to me seriously. Why, they said, should people talk like that? Many of the daily papers assured us we were all right; politicians of a certain type—honest men, but pro-Germans, and certain Cabinet Ministers—declared that the idea of a conflict

with Germany only emanated from the perverted minds of alarmists. They knew it, they said, from the Kaiser's own mouth. What a splendid man the Kaiser was, to be sure, and so "cultured"! A certain Archbishop even says so to-day, and without blushing!

As for the toast, "Der Tag," that was merely supposed to be a figure of speech to uphold the spirit of the German Navy and Army. We know better now, don't we? It has been brought home to us—to our very shores. Over 80,000 of our sons, the finest in the land, have already paid the penalty, by death or disablement, for our criminal folly and want of foresight.

Are we still going on living in this fool's paradise? Any man, I say, who is not stirred by the awful lessons already taught us, and still refuses to assert himself, is nothing but a disgrace to his country, aiding and abetting in jeopardising our national existence.

Wake up, young men of England, and do something! I would kick those cowardly shirkers who are still looking on in magnificent indifference, enjoying their football and golf, leaving their fellow-countrymen to fight and die for them.

We are at war! In war there is only one way of prosecuting it, namely, by trying with might and main to destroy our enemy—and quickly too. All sentiment must be put aside; magnanimity towards a foe can only come in when he is beaten, and has proved himself worthy of it.

But what, then, about the enemy in our midst? While our sons are shedding their blood in a foreign land for Britain's cause, you hear people here at home talking about their nice German

“friends”! It is monstrous, it is contemptible, and more disgusting than language can express, to tolerate such talk while our gallant sons are fighting for our very existence at the front. Remember that the man who can now continue his friendship with a German may prove a traitor to his country, and even be conniving at the murder of his fellow-citizens. If so, he is nothing but a human monster.

From the very first day of the outbreak of this war I put myself in touch with the various authorities—the Home Office, the Admiralty, the Board of Trade, and Scotland Yard—with regard to the spy-system, and other military and diplomatic questions. But it is very difficult to prosecute those enquiries individually, as the various authorities—of necessity, no doubt, and by great pressure of work—are compelled to delegate their handling to departments which may not always view them with the attention they deserve, or are incapable of following them up.

Gentlemen, I should like to ask you whether, as in the case of the “Press Bureau,” there should not equally be an “Espionage Board,” with a responsible and able official at its head to deal with the spy question, which seems to me of much greater importance, as it certainly is the more pressing of the two? Surely it is recognized that no responsible Editor, for the sake of the enlarged sale of his paper, would be so base or disloyal as to publish any information which might assist the enemy. The English Press is of too high a standard for that. But I do think that the splendid initiative taken by the “Globe” and

“Evening News,” followed by other papers, on the espionage question, deserves much greater credit than they have so far received for their bold and exemplary action.

To show you beyond doubt how thoroughly the Germans are working their spy-system in this country, I will just state a case coming within my own experience. I could mention many more, but realising the amount of astonishing toleration extended to the German spy even by authorities in high places, I must to-night be cautious for fear of being dragged into an action for libel. My firm runs a line of steamers between England and Brazil. One of them—called the “Rio Iguassu,” carrying a cargo of some 6,000 tons of coal—was captured and sunk by the German cruiser “Karlsruhe” in the Atlantic just south of the Equator, on the 22nd September last. The officers and crew of my ship were taken on board some German steamer standing by the cruiser, and landed safely at Teneriffe.

On their arrival in England, 5th November last, my Captain handed me a very nicely prepared typewritten document, signed by the Commander and another officer of the “Karlsruhe,” purporting to be a “receipt” for my steamer, and I naturally made full enquiries about the incident. It appeared that, after helping themselves to all the coal they wanted, or could conveniently get on board the “Karlsruhe,” it was decided to sink my ship. The German Lieutenant in charge of the operation told my Captain that three other steamers of mine had passed within a day or two of each other, and that, although the “Karlsruhe” could easily have sunk them also, they

were allowed to proceed. My Captain naturally asked why he should be singled out as the unfortunate victim, when the Lieutenant significantly replied that, seeing my other steamers were only loaded with *gas coal*, which was useless to the cruiser for steaming purposes, the "Karlsruhe" would not waste fuel to catch them or shell to sink them with.

My steamers had all been loaded in the Tyne, and if there are no spies on the East Coast, or in English ports, can you tell me how the German cruiser received her information about the quality of coal some 4,000 miles at sea? Why, it does not require a very high standard of intelligence to realise that from the loading port in England the information must have been passed direct to Germany, and then by wireless transmitted to those of her cruisers at sea still left to harass our commerce.

This concrete example, I think, should be sufficient to dispel any doubt on the question of espionage in our midst. It is monstrous to realise the leniency displayed by some judges and magistrates towards the enemy in this respect. Do we fraternise with and still allow the German—naturalized or otherwise—to roam about our seaports, especially on the East Coast? If so, we may expect developments.

Personally I feel convinced that the recent raids by German cruisers against our East Coast can only be rendered possible by information received from spies. Speaking as a sailor, I cannot conceive that any foreigner would approach our coast so closely, and with such audacity and confidence, in a haze, without the aid of either a

localized pilot on board, or some local detached assistant, either afloat or on shore; but I predict that there are even greater surprises in store for us, and while the German shells fell short of Yarmouth, there is no reason why they should not find their mark in some of our coast towns on a future occasion. "Wait and see."*

English good nature is a sterling virtue, but, when it amounts to misplaced confidence in German honour, it becomes a positive vice.

Gentlemen, we are at war—war to the knife, and to a finish—against what has already been proved beyond question to be the most dastardly and cruel enemy, who might even put a Nero to the blush. Therefore, I pray you all, you Englishmen, to make yourselves worthy of the great name you bear, to wake up, and not go to sleep until you have each done your little bit towards crushing the enemy and his crafty spies. The fact of your being able to say hereafter that you did what in you lay during this Titanic struggle will not only prove a great relief to your conscience, but also be a high and noble heritage to leave to your children.

Gentlemen and fellow-citizens, I conclude by saying: "Do *your* duty, and God will bless England, and give her victory!"

* As a matter of fact, we had not to wait so very long for the fulfilment of this prophecy, which was realised on the Yorkshire coast—at the Hartlepools, Whitby, and Scarborough—16th December, 1914, or just three weeks after the delivery of this speech.

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